



New Teacher Preparation and Certification Regulations: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

On June 4, 2014, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted regulations to raise the bar for entry into teacher preparation programs and for professional certification. The following FAQ and responses address common concerns from the field.

Q: What are the new teacher preparation regulations adopted by the State Board of Education?

A: The New Jersey State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted new regulations around traditional and alternate routes of teacher preparation. The new regulations include the following **changes for traditional route** candidates and preparation programs:

- Minimum GPA for entry into a program raised from an individual candidate's 2.5 to 'cohort average' of 3.0, with no individual below a 2.75, by September 1, 2015
- Passage of basic skills assessment required for candidates admitted into a program by September 1, 2015
- Certification GPA raised from 2.75 to 3.0 for candidates graduating after September 1, 2016
- Completion of a performance-based assessment required for certification for candidates graduating after September 1, 2016. Passage of performance-based assessment required for certification for candidates graduating after September 1, 2016

The new regulations include the following **changes for alternate route** candidates and preparation programs:

- Minimum GPA for certification raised from 2.75 to 3.0 for candidates graduating after September 1, 2016
- Passage of basic skills assessment required for certification after September 1, 2015

Each of the changes is discussed in more detail below.

Q: What is the status of these regulations?

A: The regulations were adopted on June 4, 2014 and are effective as of July 2014.

Traditional Teacher Preparation

Entry GPA

Q: What are the requirements around entry GPA?

A: For program entry, by September 1, 2015, the accepted *cohort* of candidates must have an average GPA of at least 3.0. Each individual within the cohort must have a GPA of at least 2.75.

Q: What is the definition of a 'cohort' and the students that are included in a cohort?

A: An "accepted cohort of candidates" means the group of candidates accepted into all educator preparation programs across an Institute of Higher Education within the academic year.

Q: Does the cohort include both undergraduate and graduate students?

A: Yes, the cohort should include all candidates accepted into all educator preparation programs across an Institute of Higher Education within the academic year.

Q: Can institutions use an advanced degree GPA instead of undergraduate GPA for calculation of the cohort average?

A: Institutions can use their own discretion if they choose to accept an individual's GPA from a completed, advanced degree.

Q: Can institutions use non-degree coursework in calculating the cohort average?

A: When admitting students, institutions **should not** use a GPA associated with non-degree coursework.

Q: What percent of the cohort can fall below the 3.0 GPA? What percent have to meet the 3.0 GPA?

A: There is no specific percentage of the cohort whose GPA can fall below a 3.0, though no individual candidate may fall below a 2.75. Instead, institutions should ensure that their overall admitted cohort average is at least a 3.0.

Basic Skills Assessment

Q: What are the new requirements around passing a Basic Skills Assessment?

A: For acceptance into a teacher preparation program, a candidate must pass a 'Commissioner-approved test of basic reading, writing, mathematics skills.' Currently, there are two tests that are acceptable: the Praxis Pre-Professional Skills Test (Praxis I) and Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (Praxis Core).

Q: By when must programs require passage of a Basic Skills Assessment?

A: By September 1, 2015, a program's entry requirements must include passage of a Basic Skills Assessment. This requirement applies to candidates beginning teacher preparation program coursework on or after September 1, 2015.

Q: Do circumstances exist when a candidate is not required to pass a basic skills assessment?

A: Yes. Students (whether undergraduate or graduate) with at least one of the minimum scores provided below would not be required to pass the Basic Skills Assessment:

- SAT: 1660 combined score (critical reading, math, and writing)
- ACT: 23
- GRE: 310 combined score (quantitative and verbal) and 4.0 on the analytical writing section

Q: Are the new Praxis Core tests merely the new computer version of the Praxis I or are they entirely new?

A: The Praxis Core test is an entirely new test reflecting the Common Core State Standards. The test is administered via computer only. In July 2013, the State Board passed a resolution accepting the Praxis Core test as a 'Commissioner-approved' test of basic skills.

Q: Are the Praxis Core tests available to take now?

A: Yes, the Praxis Core tests are currently available.

Q: What are the cut scores for the Praxis Core tests?

A: The State Board accepted the cut scores recommended by Educational Testing Service (ETS). They are:

- Reading (Test Code 5712): 156
- Writing (Test Code 5722): 162
- Math (Test Code 5732): 150

Q: Are candidates able to take the Praxis I to fulfill the basic skills requirement?

A: Yes, according to ETS, the Praxis I will be available until June 2014 and the Department will recognize its scores. To ensure a seamless transition to the Praxis Core test, however, candidates are encouraged to begin taking the Core well in advance of June 2014.

Q: Do the Praxis II Content tests count as a measure of basic skills for entry into a preparation program?

A: No, the Praxis II content tests do not qualify as a measure of basic skills for entry into a preparation program. Praxis II tests are designed to measure specific content knowledge, while basic skills assessments, like the Praxis I or Praxis Core tests, are designed to measure general skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Please note that passage of the appropriate State test of subject matter knowledge (Praxis II) is required for purposes of certification, in addition to passage of Praxis I.

Q: If a teacher education candidate is accepted into a program prior to the proposed changes, and defers the start of their coursework until September 1, 2015 or later, do they have to pass the 'Commissioner-approved basic skills test'?

A: Yes. Anyone whose coursework begins on or after September 1, 2015 must follow the new requirements.

Q: Is it acceptable to provisionally accept students into teacher preparation programs who have not yet taken and passed the basic skills assessment?

A: Preparation programs may conditionally accept candidates with the agreement that they pass the Commissioner-approved test (or be eligible by way of the SAT, ACT, or GRE score exception), if coursework begins September 1, 2015 or later. The entrance requirements have not changed for any students looking to begin Educator Preparation Program coursework prior to September 1, 2015.

Exit/Certification GPA

Q: What are the GPA requirements to exit a program and obtain certification?

A: To be recommended to the Department for certification, a candidate graduating after September 1, 2016 must have obtained a cumulative GPA of 3.0. This applies to candidates seeking certification via the traditional or alternate route to teaching.

Q: After September 1, 2016, can colleges and universities recommend candidates for certification if the candidate has a GPA lower than 3.0?

A: Yes. Colleges and universities may use their discretion in applying the following flexibility for purposes of recommending a candidate for certification, although they are not required to do so:

- A candidate with a GPA equal to or higher than 2.75 can still meet the standards for certification as long as the candidate's score on the appropriate State test of subject matter knowledge exceeds the passing score by 10 percent or more.

Q: After September 1, 2016 do colleges and universities have options when recommending candidates for certification with a GPA substantially higher than 3.0?

A: Yes. Colleges and universities may use their discretion in applying the following flexibility for purposes of recommending a candidate for certification, although they are not required to do so:

- A candidate with a GPA of 3.5 or higher, but whose score on the appropriate State test of subject matter knowledge falls below the passing score by no more than five percent, can still

meet the standard.

Performance-based assessment

Q: What are the requirements around passage of a performance-based assessment?

A: Any candidates who graduate after September 1, 2016 must pass a Commissioner-approved performance-based assessment of teaching.

Q: What constitutes a ‘Commissioner-approved performance-based assessment?’

A: The Department expects to determine the list of approved instruments by early 2015 and will provide additional information at that time.

Alternate-Route Teacher Preparation

Entry GPA

Q: What are the requirements around entry GPA?

For those graduating after September 1, 2016, a GPA of 3.0 is required for entry. This GPA can be achieved in a baccalaureate degree program, higher degree program, or a State-approved post-baccalaureate certification program with a minimum of 13 semester-hour credits.

Q: After September 1, 2016, does flexibility exist regarding the 3.0 GPA requirement?

A: Yes. The following flexibility exists:

- A candidate with a GPA of 2.75 or higher can still meet the standards for a Certificate of Eligibility (CE) as long as the candidate’s score on the appropriate State test of subject matter knowledge exceeds the passing score by 10 percent or more.
- A candidate with a GPA of 2.75 or higher can be sponsored by a provisional training program prior to applying for a CE as long as the candidate is employed when he or she participates in the provisional training program. These candidates shall not make up more than 10 percent of a provisional training program’s annual accepted candidates.
- A candidate with a GPA of 3.5 or higher, but whose score on the appropriate State test of subject matter knowledge falls below the passing score by no more than five percent, meets the standards for a CE.

Basic Skills Assessment

Q: What are the new requirements around passing a Basic Skills Assessment?

Those entering after September 1, 2015, must achieve a minimum score on a Commissioner-approved assessment of basic reading, writing and mathematics skills. Currently, there are two tests that are acceptable: the Praxis Pre-Professional Skills Test (Praxis I) and Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (Praxis Core).

Q: Do circumstances exist when a candidate is not required to pass a Basic Skills Assessment?

A: Yes. Students with at least one of the minimum scores provided below would not be required to pass the Basic Skills Assessment:

- SAT: 1660 combined score (critical reading, math, & writing)
- ACT: 23
- GRE: 310 combined score (quantitative and verbal) and 4.0 on the analytical writing section

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